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# Library Outages - An Initial Study

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*Downloaded from Deep Blue, University of Michigan's institutional repository*

## Project Cover Sheet

Project	<p><b>Library Outages</b></p> <p><i>Library Outages – An Initial Study</i></p> <p>The Library Outages webpage lists the status of current problems with online resources. There is a link to this page from the university library gateway homepage.</p>
Committee & Members	<p><b>Usability Working Group</b></p> <p>Suzanne Chapman (chair), David Carter, Michael Creech, Shevon Desai, Karen Downing, Anne Karle-Zenith, Molly Kleinman, Shana Kimball, Gurpreet Rana</p> <p>Pratibha Bhaskaran &amp; Krystle Williams (student interns)</p>
Report Info	<p>Report Author(s): Pratibha Bhaskaran, Krystle Williams</p> <p>Contact Information: <a href="mailto:ul-usability@umich.edu">ul-usability@umich.edu</a></p> <p>Report Date: February 2008</p>
Objectives	<p>The goal for this study is to identify major areas of improvement for the Library Outages page and lay the foundation for the plan to conduct a usability analysis of the page.</p>
Methodology	<p>Method – Informal evaluation, Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Dates of study: January 2008</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restructure organization of Library Outages page to include sections for type of outages (see examples found)</li><li>• Restrict use of technical language that users may not understand</li><li>• When possible, show only limited information about the outage (extensive information can be made available in the staff view)</li><li>• Consider search feature for navigating information on the page</li><li>• Make a Distinction between the Cause of the Issue and the Steps being taken to resolve it</li><li>• Conduct informal guerilla test to determine findability of outages page and possible replacement link &amp; page title</li></ul>

## Introduction

The Library Outages page lists problems with electronic resources, maintenance issues etc; however, concern has been expressed about the usability of the page, for instance it is not clear if the label 'Library Outages' is an appropriate one. The aim of this study is to analyze the current library outages page and compare it to similar pages used by other academic libraries.

## Issues and Observations

### I. Target User Group: Students/Faculty

#### *1. Language*

- i). The language used to describe the 'update' tends to involve terminology that might be unfamiliar to a student or faculty member. In the example below, for instance, the term 'Ovid' might not be self-explanatory by itself (it could say "problem reported to database administrator"):

Title:	<b>Spine</b> <a href="#">[0362-2436]</a>
Outage Date:	10/29/2007 -- 15:00:40 (EDT)
Description:	Spine vol. 20(12) June 1995 is missing from the list of available issues.
Update:	<b>10/30/2007 -- 15:04:13 (EDT): Appears to be a Supplement issue missing; reported to Ovid</b>

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- ii). Students and faculty might not want detailed descriptions of the issue and resolution. They are more likely to want a brief statement indicating the status of the issue (in familiar language) and an alternative method, if any, to get the information they need.

### II. Target User Group: All

#### *1. Search Feature*

It is cumbersome for the user to navigate through the entire page when they are likely to be looking for information about a specific issue. The incorporation of a search feature would facilitate navigating the information on the page.

#### *2. Make a Distinction between the Cause of the Issue and the Steps being taken to resolve it*

For instance:

Title:	<b>Journal of Gerontological Nursing, AAOHN journal : official journal of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Journal of Psychosocial Nursing &amp; Mental Health Services, Ophthalmic Surgery, Lasers &amp; Imaging, OTJR : occupation, participation and health.</b>
Outage Date:	01/15/2008 -- 12:14:00 (EDT)
	University of Michigan   MLibrary   Feb 2008   ul-usability@umich.edu

Description: When you select the full text of an article, it asks for a subscription number. However, the subscription number provided by UM does not seem to work. The journals have this note “Effective January 1, 2008, SLACK Incorporated is discontinuing Electronic Access via user name and password for Institutional customers which is currently provided with print subscriptions” under their Change in Policy Update.

Update: 01/18/2008 -- 12:05:41 (EDT): We have discontinued electronic access to these titles. This has been forwarded to cataloging to update the records.

Jnl.of Continuing Education in Nursing  
Jnl.of Nursing Education  
**Jnl.of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health**  
**Ophthalmic Surgery & Lasers**  
**AAOHN**  
**OTJR**  
Jnl.of Gerontological Nursing  
**Orthopedics ("orthosupersite" no longer associated with our subscription-it is gratis for individuals)**

*Suggestion:*

Separate the cause of the outage from steps for resolution. For instance:

**Status: 01/18/2008 -- 12:05:41 (EDT): We have discontinued electronic access to these titles.**

Jnl.of Continuing Education in Nursing  
Jnl.of Nursing Education  
Jnl.of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health  
Ophthalmic Surgery & Lasers  
AAOHN  
OTJR  
Jnl.of Gerontological Nursing  
Orthopedics ("orthosupersite" no longer associated with our subscription-it is gratis for individuals)

**Follow-up: This has been forwarded to cataloging to update the records.**

**And possibly reword: Titles have been forwarded to cataloging to update records to reflect discontinued status**

Edit content for a less technical audience (or one that is not familiar with the functions of the library system and may require more explicit language to avoid ambiguity and aid understanding).

## Comparative Analysis


Of the other library websites studied, none had links to outage information on the homepage, as is the case with the U-M library website. Several libraries provided outage information on their blogs; most dealt with scheduled outages and maintenance.

**1. Harvard.edu - Library Outages Page:** <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k5486>

As opposed to “Library Outages”, the label used is "Known problems and downtime." However, section labels include “System Outages” and “Known Bugs.”

Hi Guest


my.harvard.edu | Wednesday, 23 January 2008 | login



HARVARD LIBRARIES

KNOWN PROBLEMS & DOWNTIME

Known Problems & Downtime

My Links: 

System Outages

**Systems**  
All systems are working as expected.

Known Bugs

There are no known bugs at present

E-Resource Downtime & Known Problems

**ScienceDirect PDF articles with MACs and Safari**  
There is a known problem with the current version of Adobe Acrobat Reader and viewing ScienceDirect PDF articles with a MAC and the Safari browser. ScienceDirect has asked for a fix from Adobe and Safari, but until one is in place, you can:  
Hold the control button, click on the PDF link and select "download link to disk" and you can save the file to your hard drive and view it easily from there.  
You can also use Mozilla Firefox instead of Safari, which does not seem to have this problem.  
  
Last modified January 14, 2008

Scheduled System Downtime

**E-Research @ Harvard Libraries**  
  
E-Research may be unavailable due to system maintenance on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, from 5:00-7:00 am Eastern Time.  
  
The HOLLIS Catalog is regularly unavailable due to system maintenance on Sundays, from 3:00-4:00 am Eastern Time.

Don't see your problem?

If you are experiencing a problem with a Library System or an E-Resource that is not listed above, please submit it via the [Harvard Libraries Comments & Questions](#) page.

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## 2. Stanford.edu - Library Outages: <http://library.stanford.edu/catdb/status.html>

The main label used is “System Status and Known Issues,” though the term “outages” appears in the labels for sub-sections on the page.

Catalogs & Search Tools | Research Help | Libraries & Collections | Services | How to ... | About SULAIR

Socrates (SU Catalog)  
Databases and Articles  
E-Resources  
Course Reserves Catalog  
Library Catalogs  
Special Collections Finding Aids  
Off-Campus Access

Databases & Articles Go Hours & Locations Go

Printer-Friendly

### Systems Status and Known Issues

[Socrates Outages](#) | [Other Outages](#) | [Browser Issues](#)

#### Socrates Outages & Known Issues

**SOCRATES (SU CATALOG):** Socrates is unavailable on Sunday mornings from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

#### Other Outages & Known Issues

**IEEE XPLORE DIGITAL LIBRARY - JANUARY 26 :** IEEE Xplore Digital Library will be upgraded on Saturday, January 26 for up to eight hours, from 6:00am to 2:00pm PST.

**EBRARY:** ebrary will be performing monthly system maintenance on the first Tuesday of each month, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. During this period, the ebrary service may be unavailable.

**NOTES:** Some databases have restrictions on the number of simultaneous users allowed. If a database is unavailable, please try again later. If you are experiencing difficulty connecting to a resource that is not listed on this page, please fill out our [Connections Problem form](#), so we can address the problem.

#### Browser Issues

**WEB ACCELERATORS:** You may not be able to access Stanford-restricted resources if you are using a Web accelerator (such as Google Web Accelerator). Turn off accelerator software before connecting to these sites. You can [check that remote sites recognize your Stanford address](#).

**POP-UP BLOCKERS:** Some sites require that you turn off pop-up blocking software to use all their features.

<http://library.stanford.edu/catdb/status.html#hours>